

# Cher Ulysse

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## Press review

### **Gallotta revises his " Ulysses ", a ballet of optimism through movement**

Something unusual happened at the Chaillot Theatre's presentation of Jean-Claude Gallotta's play, *Cher Ulysse*. An atmosphere of gentleness, quite out of tune with present times, emanated from the stage, swept up (in all senses of the word) by the fourteen dancers. There was no affectation, no sentimentalism - rather, a sensitive benevolence.

We were suddenly swung back to the early '80s, when this cultish dance piece, *Ulysse*, was first created. This reworking, conceived as a missive addressed to the Greek hero, is a variation on that theme. Its essence jumps out at you – a faultless optimism, a faith in dance, in love, in the future, which almost makes you want to weep.

What is it that is being danced in *Cher Ulysse*? The white-clad performers unwind a string of steps, which are of classical origin, though they have been through the mill of the grotesque, so typical of Gallotta's style. Launched like spinning-tops, their frenzy signals their rapport with the world – elated and direct.

This is movement as the life principle itself – a credo which Jean-Claude Gallotta undoubtedly felt the need to rediscover in *Cher Ulysse*.

Rosita Boisseau

Le Monde – the 16<sup>th</sup> october of 2007

## **A new journey - *Cher Ulysse* by Jean-Claude Gallotta**

Jean-Claude Gallotta - the force behind the choreographic department at Grenoble's Centre for Culture - first presented his *Ulysse* in 1981. The ballet marked a new chapter in contemporary French dance. Turning his back on Béjart in favour of the American, Merce Cunningham, Jean-Claude Gallotta invents his own language. His dance is created in his own image – the big boy with long legs and agile feet, nervous and jumpy, with brusque movements, brief contacts, unfinished gestures, the result of an energy that is compressed and then released. This is a language in which the backbone rests on the rhythm of the footwork, a series of endless tiny steps, little mouse work. With Garrota, there is no fluidity, no horizontal lines, but rather a verticality that recalls his own silhouette. In fact, we see him on stage in this new journey that he undertakes with *Ulysse*, which has already been reworked twice before in 1993 and 1995. This fourth version explores our world. To the sound of electronic music by Strigall, Gallotta launches : 'Melancholy will not end'. This is his new creed. Indeed, his troupe play with its variety, its hybridity... it is a beautiful lesson in tolerance, a word often invoked but which here finds expression. Gallotta would not be Gallotta if he did not spice up his journey with a pinch of humour. His siren – because there is one – does not evoke Ulysses. She is like a skeleton adorned with a blonde wig, waltzing on the arm of a sailor, an image that speaks for itself. The whole production oozes an energy that thrusts the men into the arms of the women and vice versa, reviving the eternal return that makes the world go round.

**Marion Thébaud**

**Le Figaro – the 15<sup>th</sup> of october 2007**

## **Happy is he who, like Ulysses**

...has made a long journey. This show has in fact been through more than two decades - reworked first in 1993 and then inspiring another piece of choreography that is today's offering. Back in 1981, it was Jean-Claude Gallotta's first major work. Now, it has been recreated in connection with a children's project led by Josette Baiz, in a version that can also be seen at the MC2 (Grenoble Cultural Centre).

'I thought it interesting to put on the other one at the same time in its adult version,' the choreographer explains. 'But it was difficult because Ulysse seemed to belong to the past, to a time when we were all committed to overthrowing classical ballet. It was my first show in the big auditorium at the Culture Centre, at a time of renewal when anything was possible. Twenty-six years later, it was difficult to take it up again. That's what gave me the idea of writing to Ulysses to ask him where he was and entitling this version, Dear Ulysses''.

Exploring the notion of exile, the show is reconstructed around the idea of time passing. On his return, Ulysses is like a stranger in a land that he scarcely recognises. From now on, the white tapestries surrounding the stage are lowered, as if the curtain has fallen upon an epoch that has ended; the costumes are no longer white but bear traces of an altered purity; the music has also changed, allowing tormented sounds to land upon this electronic shore. 'I thought of this reworking as a kind of re-orchestration, conserving the original dynamic in the gestures. It was not a question of negation, rather of finding some midway between rejection and continuity'.

The result is simply magnificent. The production emanates a constant tension between feelings that are simultaneously essential and contradictory, a mixture of joy and tenderness, hope and despair, energy and frailty, which is profoundly moving.

**Annabel Brot**

**Dauphiné Libéré – the 17<sup>th</sup> of october 2007**